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## The General is taking form



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
In the foundry, the general awaits his completion. See story on page 2.

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# UPFRONT

■ **UNIVERSITY:** \$1.2-million gift from former board chair

## Brock in bronze: Icon's sculpture coming together

QMI Agency Niagara

A \$1.2-million sculpture of Brock University's namesake is taking shape on the U.S. West Coast.

The six-metre-tall bronze sculpture of War of 1812 Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock — a gift from longtime university supporter and former board chair David Howes — will be placed in front of the Schmon Tower once complete.

The piece, by renowned Canadian sculptor Danek Mozdzenski, is in its final stages of production, the university said in a news release. University officials will be informed of a firm completion date in the new year.

Photos from the Oregon foundry where the sculpture is being completed were also released.

More than 100 component parts of the artist's design have been cast in bronze and must be fitted together. When the complete statue is approved by the artist, a surface patina and lacquer finish will be applied.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Artist Danek Mozdzenski demonstrates the pose he gave to Isaac Brock.



The base of the bronze sculpture features Brock's boot on the floor is his hat.

■ **ALBA DICENSO**

## Welland native named to Order of Canada

ALLAN BENNER  
QMI Agency Niagara

Despite her many accomplishments in her career as a registered nurse and educator, Alba DiCenso's focus was always on helping people.

"She is completely devoted to not only her work, but just helping. It's her nature to be helping the community," said her brother, Pelham resident Albert DiCenso.

Now, the woman who grew up in Welland is becoming a member of the Order of Canada.

"The Order of Canada is something that is just so perfect for her — the fact that she wants to do the best she can to help Canada as a whole."

Alba, who could not be reached for comment Sunday, is retired from a career as a professor at McMaster University's School of Nursing and Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Her research into evidence-based nursing and contribu-

tions to the development of nurse practitioners earned her Canada's highest civilian award, announced Thursday by Governor General David Johnston.

In a media release issued by the university, Alba said she is "deeply honoured and grateful."

"I have had the privilege to lead research to evaluate the expanding role of nurse practitioners and to facilitate their effective integration in Canada's health system," she said.

"It has also been most rewarding to develop resources to help nurses apply emerging research evidence in their practice, to train a new generation of nurse researchers and to see my research reflected in public policy."

Alba, an international leader in the introduction and promotion of evidence-based practice, was co-founder of the Canadian Centre for Evidence-Based Nursing as well as founder and lead editor of the Evidence-Based Nursing Journal published by the British Medical Journal and the Royal College of Nursing in the U.K.

The awards ceremony will be held at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.



ALBA DICENSO

allan.benner@sunmedia.ca  
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■ **ONTARIO:** Smoking on restaurant and bar patios now illegal

# Niagara rings in new smoking law

DAN DAKIN  
QMI Agency Niagara

The bitter cold didn't stop a handful of dedicated cigar aficionados from ringing in both 2015 and new smoking regulations Wednesday night.

What was supposed to be an old-fashioned smog and cigar party on the patio at Jiggs's Pub and Grub in Fortville turned into a few smokers brave enough to stand outside in the cold.

The party was a sendoff to Ontario's former smoking regulations, which changed at the stroke of midnight Jan. 1, making it illegal to smoke on any restaurant or bar patio. It's also now illegal to smoke at publicly owned outdoor sports and recreational facilities, but in Niagara that had already been covered under a regional bylaw.

Matt and Jen Speight, who own Jiggs's on Hwy. 20 in Fortville, decided to have some fun with the rule change, even though they're not particularly happy about it.

Like many restaurant and bar owners, the Speights see the new rules as causing more problems than they fix.

"We're either in or up to the bar. We're not a full-swing restaurant where we're getting people strung on the patio having a full meal. Mostly people want to sit out there

and have a drink and a smoke," Matt Speight said.

Speight is worried patrons will try to smoke outdoors to the sidewalk while they're outside.

"We're responsible and we get fined for it if there's an issue, so we'll have to enforce the front door," he said. "At the same time, they could be walking out on our beer bill because they're going out for a smoke."

Scott Hill, the co-owner of both Cat's Caboose in St. Catharines and Cat's in Niagara Falls, said he's fine with the new rules, but agreed they could cause problems.

"I think it's a good thing, and I'm a smoker," he said. "It's great for families and kids, that's how we looked at it when smoking left the (inside of) restaurants. It didn't hurt us, it helped us."

Hill's concern is where the smokers will go to light up.

"Am I going to have security here on the patio to stop people from smoking? We don't own the property around the restaurant, so what if someone is smoking on the landlord's property in St. Catharines, we're surrounded by a parking lot," he said.

Hill also wonders where his staff will go to smoke.

"I guess productivity will be up because

they won't be able to smoke," he said with a laugh.

"Over the long haul, it will be a good thing, but it's going to affect us."

Unlike some past smoking rule changes, Niagara's casinos aren't exempt.

Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort spokesman Greg Medburn confirmed the patios at 21 Club, R5 and Golden Lotus all went smoke-free Jan. 1.

Under the new laws, anyone caught smoking on a restaurant or bar patio could be fined up to \$350. The new regulations are meant to make it more difficult to buy and smoke tobacco.

"These changes are to protect kids and youth from accessing tobacco products and the harmful effects of smoking, and to protect the people of Ontario from exposure to tobacco use," said Andrew Robertson, a spokesman for associate health minister Dipika Damerla. "Making smoking less visible will make it seem less socially acceptable to kids and can reduce the likelihood that

## Comments from QMI Agency Niagara Facebook pages and websites.

"More government intervention. Another money grab," Dave Middleton

"Second hand smoke is the primary issue. Smoking is more invasive to those in the immediate area. It's as simple as that. There are many smokers who are considerate of their smoke blowing habits but many others who aren't." The Flagger

"This is not going to stop I think it will come down to smokers taking a stand. Enough is enough. I agree with non-

smoking restaurants. I agree with protecting the children on playgrounds. But bar patios, that is stupid. I think that an owner should have the right to post if it's a smoking patio or not. Then the patron decides if he or she wants to go in." John Hudak

"Banning in parks or government is great, but bar patios, they're crossing the line and I don't even smoke." Simon Appleton

"Although I think this is fantastic, I still don't understand how they're going to monitor it. They can't even catch people smoking in their cars with their kids inside." Stacey Baker

few years.

NIDP MPP France Gelinas, who has pushed hard for a ban on flavoured tobacco, said these products are developed specifically to create a new generation of young smokers.

—with files from QMI Agency

dan.dakin@sunmedia.ca  
Twitter: @dandakins

■ **HEALTH:** Niagara Region public health gets \$1.825M infusion

## More cash for mental health programs

ROB HOULE  
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Region public health is set to receive an extra \$1.825 million for mental health services.

The bulk of the money, \$1.425 million, will go toward a second regional assessment community treatment team, or ACTT. The balance is earmarked for early intervention services for young adults age 16 and over.

The Region currently has one ACTT team, which consists of 12 mental-health professionals including a psychiatrist, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists "who work with people who have serious mental health problems, who do not respond to more traditional treatment," said Adrienne Jugley, the public health department's director of clinical services.

Traditional treatment, she said, involves clients seeking help with psychiatrists and follow-up visits with counsellors and nurses.

"Some clients don't do well with that," Jugley said.

"They are so unwell, their symptoms prevent them from doing well with those more traditional services. The ACTT team reaches out to those clients. It brings all the treatment services into their home, or wherever they're comfortable."

The ACTT team can bring services to those clients up to seven days per week, Jugley said.

She said the ACTT model was implemented in the province approximately 25 years ago as a means of keeping people

with mental health issues out of hospital.

"These are people who are the most unwell, typically, and have huge hospitalization histories. We have clients who have as many as two years in hospitalization in the prior two years to coming on with us," Jugley said.

She said following ACTT team intervention, there is an 86% reduction in client hospitalization.

"The results are really quite remarkable. If you show fidelity to the model ... you will see some amazing outcomes for those clients," Jugley said, noting the extra ACTT is stretched thin, servicing 80 to 100 clients.

According to its population, Niagara should have three assertive community treatment teams, Jugley said.

She said the money for the new team is the result of lobbying the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network over the past two years.

A new team will allow public health to whittle down a growing wait list that has people suffering severe mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, waiting six months to a year to be seen by someone from ACTT.

The balance of the new money, \$400,000, will go toward early intervention services for young adults.

The current early intervention service provides rapid, comprehensive assessment and treatment to young people showing early signs of psychosis.

The new money will expand the service to people with other mental health concerns.

"That focus will be on young adults — late teens to early 20s — and will be people showing first signs of mental health concerns, as well as transitional age youth. Those would be young people leaving the children's mental

health system and going into the adult one," Jugley said.

"If you intervene early and you have great outcomes there, you hope to reduce the need for services that are much more intense and long-term. Ideally, you want

to put efforts into those early services to reduce the need for the more intensive ones later on."

The new funding brings the public health department's budget for its mental health programs to \$5.9 million.

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# COMMENT

## GRANT !#\*&\*!!

Grant LaFleche

## So long 2014, and good riddance

GRANT LAFLECHE  
 QMI Agency Niagara

**W**ell, so long and good riddance 2014. Don't let the door hit you on the way out.

I am not much of one for new year's resolutions. Based on, um, science-type research I have conducted, they never pan out anyway.

Hey, don't look at me like that. The research was totally legit. I was wearing a lab coat and everything.

Still, although New Year's Eve is really a meaningless date — it's just an artifact of our calendar — let's roll with that idea that the new year is a time for fresh starts or whatever. Thus, in the spirit of columns written at year end, I present six things that plagued us during the previous 12 months that we could do without in 2015.

### 1) "Manspreading"

This word is just... ugh... it's awful. It sounds like a sandwich spread made from pulped-y chromosomes otypes, like some kind of soylent green jam. That it entered our lexicon in the waning days of 2014 is a travesty of the English language.

The term, for those with enough sense not to read the news, refers to men who, on public transit, spread their legs so wide they annex the seats next like Vladimir Putin.

Men's rights organizations, determined to prove they are just cabals of lunatics, actually claimed the term was sexist, as are transit authorities attempting to stop the blocking of bus and subway seats.

Men's rights groups, please shut up. And to the (ugh) manspreaders doing the spreading, stop it. You're not latter-day Ross Perles. Have some manners.

As for the rest of us? Just stop using the word. It's creepy.

### 2) "Foodie"

While I am on the subject of words that make my eye twitch like Chief Insign, Dreyfus when he hears Inspector Clouseau's name, we need to do away with the word "foodie".

Aside from the fact it actually sounds like some sort of vegetable sweater, it is used to describe someone who likes food as opposed, I figure, to those who don't.

"Am I a foodie, No, no, I hate food. I prefer to eat glass and rocks" is not a phrase a human has ever spoken.

Yes, it's been around for a few years now and some use it to denote a "refined" taste in food and wine. But let's face it, that's just pretentious. Like someone who likes to breathe clean air calling themselves an "oxygenic".

### 3) The selfie-stick

This was described by someone on Twitter as the "wand of Narcissus" and no more fitting description of anything has ever been written. This stick lets you take better selfies with your phone. (Note to self: "selfie" is as dumb a word as "foodie") Apparently, we have not evolved the taking of uninteresting self-portraits to a fine art yet and we really, really need to.

Everyone takes selfies. You do it. I do it. But the existence of the selfie stick should be regarded as a warning that if we don't curb our collective narcissism, the epitaph for our species will read: "Killed by cars they didn't see coming because they were too busy taking photos of themselves with phones attached to the end of poles."

### 4) Religion on planes

This is kind of like religious manspreading. Is "Godspreading" a word? Ugh, it's just as bad. Nevermind. There have been

several incidents of ultra orthodox Jews known as Haredi delaying flights because they refuse to sit beside women on the plane. When they do, they stand up in the aisles and cause all sorts of commotion as though they were about to be eaten by Godzilla.

Look, boys, I don't care what your faith says. You cannot bog down everyone else's travel plans because being near a member of the opposite sex freaks you out. Grow up, book your seats with other men, or simply walk to your next destination.

### 5) Bill Cosby and Jian Ghomeshi

Dear sirs:

Please just leave the planet. And take Ebola with you.

Thank you.

Signed;

Everyone not killed while using a selfie stick.

### 6) Vaccine deniers

If I added "Justin Bieber" to this list, no comment would be necessary. Nor is one really needed for vaccine deniers. We've seen enough outbreaks of preventable diseases in Canada to know they are just awful and irresponsible people.

## Shipwrecks — Algoma Progress

SKIP OLLHAM  
 For QMI Agency Niagara

**W**hen a ship sails for 46 years there are bound to be a few scrapes along the way.

The *Algoma Progress*, which passed upbound in the Welland Canal for the final time on Dec. 30, 2014, had a few under the previous name of *Canadian Progress* but none were serious.

The 222.50-metre-long self-unloader was built in St. Catharines and commissioned at Port Weller Dry Docks in July 1968. It departed the shipyard to load coal for Toronto in August and carried on in the

aggregates trades for the rest of its career.

*Canadian Progress* sustained fire damage in the engine room at Toronto on Jan. 4, 1973, ran aground in the St. Lawrence River east of Ogdensburg, N.Y., on April 23, 1986, and was stranded on Bullard's Reef while trying to dodge a tug/barge combination in the Detroit River on Dec. 11, 1988.

The ship moved from Upper Lakes Shipping to Algoma Central Corp. in 2011 and spent its final four years as *Algoma Progress*. Following a sale to International Marine Salvage, the ship arrived at Port Colborne on Dec. 30 for dismantling and recycling in 2015.



HARRY ANDERSEN/SUPPLIED PHOTO

The last trip of Algoma Progress.

# LOCAL NEWS

## WINEFEST

# Twenty Valley Winter Winefest this weekend

BOB TYMCZYSHYN  
QMI Agency Niagara

Temperatures have plummeted and there could not be a better time for the sixth annual Twenty Valley Winter WineFest that kicks off Friday and continues Saturday and Sunday on the first weekend of the month-long Niagara Icewine Festival.

"We're super excited," said Sue-Ann Staff, president of Twenty Valley Tourism Association and owner and winemaker of Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery.

"It's the first time we've had a Friday night event. We go to all this effort so we thought why not spread the love and enjoy one more day."

Canadian Country Music Association

2013 female artist of the year Kira Isabella headlines the ticketed event Friday night with wines and food trucks on site in Jordan Village.

Chef Michael Smith will be presenting a four-course plated dinner in the Windows Room of Cave Spring and the following day, a three-course brunch as well as a cooking demonstration and book signing.

Organizers are expecting ideal

weather.

"For the icewine festival we hope to have some cold weather," said Staff. "There will be an ice sculpture demonstration going on, so it would be nice to have some cold weather for him."

"We may be in height of icewine harvest as well, which is unusual when the two collide like this and it will make for some very busy days for those in the industry."

And Staff will be getting best barrel rolling outfit ready which she calls a bit of a spectacle and one of the best draws for the weekend.

"If I'm not in the barrel-rolling contest I will get hate mail. I have to win these golden blinnies," she added.

For more information about the event, see [www.20valley.ca/page/winter\\_winefest](http://www.20valley.ca/page/winter_winefest).



FILE PHOTO

Jane Dietl, manager of retail sales and hospitality at Peninsula Ridge Winery, puts a bottle of ice back after serving a patron during the Twenty Valley Winter WineFest in Jordan Village Saturday, January 11, 2014. People filled the streets of Jordan Village to take in the food, beverages and festivities at the Twenty Valley Winter WineFest.

## IN BRIEF

### Xmas tree collection Saturday

Niagara Region is preparing for its annual Christmas tree collection Saturday.

Trees must be placed at the curb no later than 7 a.m. and all decorations,

including bulbs, tinsel and lights, must be removed.

Trees cannot be placed on top of or inside a snow bank, and cannot be placed inside a bag.

If pickup is delayed due to weather conditions, residents are advised to leave the tree at the curb or end of the driveway until it is collected.

Christmas trees can also be dropped off at any Niagara landfill free of charge. For more information, call 1-800-594-5342.

Saturday's collection does not include artificial trees.

Residents wanting to dispose of an artificial tree can use the region's large item collection service by calling 1-855-221-7771.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## BIRTHS



BOB TYMCZYSZYN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Proud parents Jon and Rachel Whyte and sister Adelaide welcomed Isaac Douglas Whyte into the world on New Year's Day. Weighing in at 7 pounds, 11 ounces, Isaac was the first baby born in Niagara in 2015.

## Little Isaac the region's first baby of 2015

BOB TYMCZYSZYN  
QMI Agency Niagara

Isaac Whyte was not expected to enter the world on the first day of 2015.

He was due Dec. 30, said mom Rachel Whyte, who gave birth at 5:26 a.m. on Jan. 1.

"We didn't really think it was going to be the first baby because midnight passed and we thought there's got to be another one born by now," said Whyte.

"I had no real thought that he was going to be first."

Just after 2 a.m., Whyte woke up husband Jon in their Thorold home telling him she was having labour pains. The couple arrived at the hospital at 4 a.m. Isaac was born less than two hours later.

"It was very straight forward, no complications, we were lucky," she said.

The couple had had a quiet New Year's

Eve.

"We had dinner with friends, it was an early night. We were home by 8:30, not a very eventful night," said Jon.

"We went to bed thinking we weren't going to be having the new year's baby, and here we are. We're very excited."

Jon admitted to being a bit out of practice as he dressed the 7 lb. 11 ounce Isaac.

As they snuggled up for a family photo, 2-1/2-year-old sister Adelaide was more excited just to have a baby brother than knowing it was New Year's Day.

Mom and dad haven't ruled out plans for more children.

"Just ask me again in a few weeks," said Rachel.

bob.tymczyszyn@sunmedia.ca  
Twitter: @bobtym

## Dr. Kimberly Dobson



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## Events This Weekend

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## RECREATION PROGRAMS & CLASSES

### Zumba Classes @ Pelham Arena:

Tuesday, January 13	9:30 am-10:30 am	Wednesday, Jan 14	7:30 pm-8:30 pm
Tuesday, January 13	7:00 pm-8:00 pm	Thursday, Jan 15	10:00 am-11:00 am

### Walking Club - Everyone is welcome! - January 13 & 15

Interested in joining a Walking Club? Then join ours! Tuesdays at Pelham Arena from 9-10 am and Thursdays at Fonthill Bandshell from 9-10:30 am. For more information, please contact (905) 892-2607 ext. 329.

### Arena Programs

Public Skating	Adult Public Skating	Adult/Preschool	Men's Shiny Hockey	Women's Shiny Hockey	Women's Learn to Play Hockey	Hockey Skills Hour	Pelham Panthers Home Games
Friday Jan 9 4:00 - 5:00 pm Tuesday Jan 13 7:30-8:30 pm Friday Jan 9 4:00-5:00 pm	Thursday Jan 15 1:00 - 2:00 pm	Friday Jan 9 10:00 - 11:00 am Tuesday Jan 13 1:00 - 2:00 pm Friday Jan 16 10:00-11:00 am	Friday Jan 9 9:00 - 10:00 am Tuesday Jan 13 8:30 - 9:30 am Friday Jan 16 9:00-10:00 am	Monday Jan 12 9:30-10:45 am Thursday Jan 15 10:30-11:45 am	Thursday Jan 15 9:30 - 10:30 am	Monday Jan 12 11 am - 12 pm Thursday Jan 15 2:00-3:00 pm	Friday Jan 9 vs. Fort Erie Friday Jan 16 vs. Thorold

**Hockey Skills Hour** - Come out to practice your hockey skills and learn from a Pelham Panthers Jr. B. Trainer. Ages 10 and up welcome. Shiny rates apply.

### Supervisor of Engineering

The Town of Pelham is now accepting resumes from applicants with an Engineering Technologist certificate with membership in the Ontario Association of Engineering Technicians & Technologist; 3 to 5 years of experience in a Public Works department, Municipal environment or related field; Level 2 Water Distribution System Operation; Level 2 Wastewater Collection System Operator; Certified Road Supervisor; good knowledge of Microsoft Office software, CAD, GIS systems; and supervisory experience. Knowledge of drinking water quality systems is considered an asset. This full-time opportunity is offered at \$65,040 - \$76,516 annually.

### Planner

The Town of Pelham is now accepting resumes from applicants with a University Degree in Urban Planning with a minimum of 3-5 years as a municipal planner or related experience. The incumbent must hold a membership with OPPI. This full-time opportunity is offered at \$56,911 - \$66,959 annually.

Visit [pelham.ca/career-opportunities](http://pelham.ca/career-opportunities) for more information and to apply for either position by Friday, January 9, 2015.

### Summer Student Jobs

Calling all students (who are between the ages of 15-30 and returning to school in September 2015)! The Town of Pelham is accepting resumes for a number of exciting summer opportunities! Visit [pelham.ca/career-opportunities](http://pelham.ca/career-opportunities) for more details & please remember to apply for all the positions you may be interested in. Deadline is Friday, January 30, 2015.

**Fenwick Commemorative Bricks**

**LAST CHANCE order by Jan. 30th**

The Village of Fenwick celebrated its 160th Anniversary in June 2013. Now you have the opportunity to be a part of Fenwick's future. Purchase a granite brick to be incorporated into the downtown Fenwick Beautification Project. **Standard, double, veteran's and corporate bricks are available.** Visit [pelham.ca](http://pelham.ca) for details or come in to Town Hall (20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill).

**pelham NIAGARA** **NEW**

# Ballroom Dance Lessons

## Learn the Waltz & East Coast Swing

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**Mondays, January 19th to March 30th, 2015 | 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.**  
At newly renovated Old Pelham Town Hall in Ridgeville (491 Canboro Road)  
Adult couples or singles - all ages - no dance experience or partner required.  
\$40.00 per person/10 week session (no class on Family Day, Feb. 16, 2015)  
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■ **ENVIRONMENT:** Snowy owls spending winter in NOTL

# 'It's like a ghost'

ALLAN BENNER  
QMI Agency Niagara

The huge white bird can often be found standing at the end of the driveway in the morning.

But as soon as David White opens the door of his home, the bird quickly takes flight to search for a more remote location to spend the day resting.

"It's an amazing sight," he said, of the three snowy owls that have taken up residence in the farm fields surrounding his rural Niagara-on-the-Lake home.

"We've had them here for several months at nighttime. You never see them during the day."

He recalled pulling into his driveway recently as an owl left its perch at the top of a utility pole and swooped down in front of him before disappearing into the darkness.

"It's like a ghost," White said. But lately, he said, the owls have been seen during the day.

"During the days we've been seeing them out in the fields and in our

garden. He sits right in our garden," he said.

"The other day we had three — a large one and two smaller ones out in the field here sitting with him."

White purchased his home and 8.8 hectares on Line 8 Rd. in July, hoping to run a hobby farm as well as his property restoration business.

Soon after moving in with his wife, Tracey, and sons Nathan, 20, and Devin, 16, the family learned they had plenty of neighbours in the surrounding farmland and bushes.

"It's been an adventure," he said.

In addition to the owls, he said, the howling of coyotes nearby has at times left his wife feeling uneasy. But another visitor gave him a fright, too.

"We have a black cougar," he said.

"We were back here plotting in August or September and he came right across the field and stopped. I looked, and it was a big black large cat. It was about 200 feet away from me, and then it took off up the escarpment."

He said his son Nathan found paw tracks that were about the

same size and shape of a cougar's. The tracks were imprinted in the soft earth surrounding a turkey pen on the farm.

Although he said people are reluctant to believe his story about the large black cat, a few of his neighbours have told him they have seen it, too.

The number of owls heading south for the winter has increased during the past few years, likely driven further away from their Arctic home in search of food.

They're the heaviest owl in North America.

Females, which often have spotted feathers similar to the largest of the birds visiting the White family, weigh on average 2.3 kilograms while males weigh 1.8 kilograms. Their wingspan can be as large as about 145 centimetres.

allan.benner@summedia.ca  
Twitter: @benner1

■ **POLITICS:** Augustyn will call on councillors to study plan

# Pelham mayor wants regional chair elected by public

BOB HOWLE  
QMI Agency Niagara

Pelham's mayor has served notice he wants council to debate how the next regional chair will be chosen.

Dave Augustyn advised council he will bring forward a motion about the election of the regional chair.

Augustyn had not yet framed the motion, but it will ask fellow councillors to support having the chair directly elected by the public.

It will also direct staff to set the legislative wheels in motion.

"I've heard so much since I've written about it (on his blog) and since the election of the chair ... I think Niagara is ready to open things up and have a vote across the public so we directly elect the regional chair," Augustyn said.

Current practice is for councillors to elect a chair from among their peers. That's how Alan Guelin of St. Catharines was elected earlier this month, replacing Gary Burroughs. Durham Region moved to a

directly elected chair for the first time Oct. 27.

Other regions that directly elect a chair are Halton and Waterloo. Peel and York follow the same process as Niagara.

"It seems to be the direction we're going in ... The time for appointments among peers, I think is over," Augustyn said. "We need to move to a more democratic system in Niagara for electing the top leadership role."

Unfortunately, the way the system is now can lead itself to backroom deals and promises of votes ... and party politics has the potential to creep in. So I think we need to open it up and let (voters) in Niagara decide."

He said a directly elected chair would allow the public to "talk about the type of vision they have for Niagara" and raise the profile of what Niagara Region does. "This can be a real unifying force to help bring Niagara together," Augustyn said.

He said last term he opposed changing the method of electing a chair because he feared party politics would drive campaigns.

"They are involved now, and they are involved in the backroom. Far better to have them out in the open and everybody knows they're there," Augustyn said.

How the regional chair is elected is not on the front-burner for new regional councillor Sandy Annunziata of Fort Erie.

"Maybe some councillors want to see democratic reform at the region. Me, I just want to see economic development," he said, noting he is more interested in seeing the province institute democratic reform, such as public recall rights in which voters can remove an elected official before their term is over.

"I hope there isn't too much discussion around democratic reforms that sidetrack people in understanding what the real issues are."

Longtime regional councillor George Marshall of Welland said he is fine with how things stand.

"What we've done is permissible under the Municipal Act, and I don't think we have to carry it any further," Marshall said.

"We elected a chair; it was clear, unequivocal. I have no desire to revisit or play games."

rob.houle@summedia.ca  
Twitter: RobH\_Standard

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ ONTARIO

## Region wants province to pony up SAMS cash

**ROB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara

It's your fault, so you pay. Niagara Region politicians have passed a motion requesting the province reimburse the local government for the full costs incurred because of problems associated with a new social assistance software program.

A provincial government described "glitch" with its new \$240-million Social

Assistance Management System (SAMS), which was installed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services on Nov. 6, resulted in millions of dollars in overpayments and payments going to incorrect addresses.

The region administers the Ontario Works program for the province at a 50-50 cost share and because of the software issues, social services staff have incurred and are expected to continue to

incur overtime for an indefinite period, social services commissioner Katherine Chislett told councillors.

"To the best of our knowledge, our clients got all the money they needed and the cheques got out on time," Chislett said in answer to

Niagara-on-the-Lake Coun. Gary Burroughs, who wanted assurance people receiving Ontario Works benefits received them. "There may be some we missed — the nature of the records and the data produced (from the new software) make it impos-



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ble to tell. But staff have been following up diligently line by line with every single client to get them their money."

In October, there were 10,400 Ontario Works cases in Niagara, representing 21,508 people.

The motion agreed to by council was actually supposed to be a notice of motion by Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn that he would be bringing the matter to the next council meeting in January, but since the issue was deemed an urgent one, councillors voted to expedite it and deal with it before Christmas.

"I'd like to thank staff for getting our residents those dollars," Port Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata said, "especially during the holi-

days. I'm sure there is a lot of stress on families because of glitches in the system."

The motion states that while the province has committed to reimburse the region up to \$156,300, that amount may be insufficient because there is no timetable for the system to be normalized.

"We don't know when the system is going to stabilize," Chislett said. "We can't tell you what the finite cost is. Every day we are still continuing to get messages from the province with system problems."

"We don't know when the system is going to end."

rob.houle@summedia.ca  
Twitter: RobH\_Stanford

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## ■ MUSIC

# Not the usual love song, or story

JOHN LAW

QMI Agency Niagara

It's something Vallyria Halladay said she has done hundreds of times before.

Only this time, she did it different. Why, she can't explain.

On July 20, she was at a pool party at her boyfriend Kirk Thomas' house in Niagara Falls. They had been going together about a month and a half, and were falling for each other hard. The party was meant to introduce their families.

As Kirk went to greet his parents at the front door, Vallyria decided to cool off by diving into the pool. Only, she misjudged how shallow it was and her head collided hard with the bottom.

"Usually when I dive, my hands are always in front of me," she

says. "So if I hit, I can push myself back up. Or block whatever it is. But for some reason ... my hands weren't there."

There was a sickening snap. Then brutal pain.

"I remember my neck breaking," she says. "The first thing that went through my head was, 'I'm going to drown,' because I didn't realize anyone was in the pool."

Her friend saw what happened and grabbed her arm. At the front door, Kirk heard the commotion and raced back to the pool to see his girlfriend being "dead lifted" out of the water.

"I ran over to her mom and asked 'What happened?' She just turned to me and said, 'Call 911 right away.' I was in a panic."

Laying on the deck, Vallyria went in and out of consciousness. Her mother desperately tried to

keep her awake.

"I noticed in the corner of my eye she was holding my hand. That's when I told her, 'Mom, I can't feel you. I can't feel anything.'"

At the hospital, she knew the news wouldn't be good. But she had to hear it from a passing nurse.

"I told her, 'Tell me straight, am I ever going to walk again? And she just shook her head. I cried. Oh, I howled.'"

Vallyria, a 23-year-old LCBO employee from Grimsby, had torn a portion of her spinal cord and snapped her neck. She was looking at the rest of her life in a wheelchair. Feeling guilty and furious with herself, she apologized to her friends and family, and attempted to break up with Kirk.

"I was pretty much saying, 'You didn't sign up for this. You've got a chance to walk out of here.'"

No chance. Thomas, a 27-year-old musician, stayed by her side and channelled his emotions into a song. When he first played his acoustic ballad "Can't Imagine for her, she still couldn't talk and was eating through tubes. Even crying hurt, but she couldn't help herself."

"I wanted him to play it over and over again. I've always been very supportive of his music, telling him 'Keep writing, keep playing.'"

Thomas wrote the song to boost her morale. But months later, he saw a new use for it.

A new bed for Vallyria will cost about \$12,000. A new commode will be \$5,000. Renovations to her mother's house, where she's staying, will be about \$87,000. Even her basic no frills electric wheelchair costs about \$30,000. She has applied for help and funding for all of these expenses, but has so far been told she doesn't qualify. "Not needy enough," was one excuse, she recalls.

Knowing the financial hardships she faced, Thomas put his song on iTunes at 99 cents per download, with all funds going to a trust fund for Vallyria's expenses once she is released from the Hotel Dieu Shaver Rehabilitation Centre,

where she has been since late November.

Shortly after he uploaded the song, Thomas received word from iTunes that it was among the Top 10 downloads for his genre (alternative folk) this past weekend.

After the past five months, it was ecstatic news. They both cling to anything positive.

Vallyria's first Christmas in a wheelchair was emotional and exhausting.

"I got tired after opening one or two gifts," she says. "People went overboard with the tape! So I used my mouth. After opening two gifts Kirk had to take over because I was so tired."

"Near the end I started crying because I didn't want to leave, but yet I was tired. My body was like, 'We need to get to bed.'"

Life since the accident has felt like a blur for Thomas, who gets an uneasy feeling just looking at his pool now. It was a big part of the reason he bought the house a year ago.

"I've been in it once after the accident, and it just doesn't feel the same," he says. "From here on out, if I have friends over to go in the pool, I've got to keep an eye on every little thing now."

john.law@sunmedia.ca



JOHN LAW / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Niagara Falls musician Kirk Thomas has uploaded a new song to iTunes to help pay for the huge expenses awaiting his girlfriend Vallyria, who broke her neck in a pool accident last summer.



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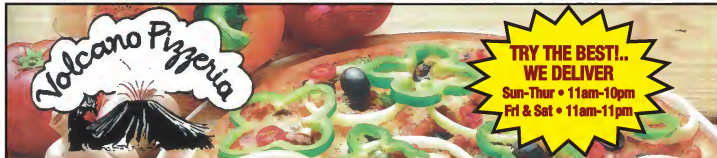
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# LOCAL NEWS

## WASTE-WATER TREATMENT

# Walker Environmental turns poop into gold

ROB HOULE

QMI Agency Niagara

Turns out we're all flushing money down the toilet.

What we flush ultimately makes its way to a Niagara Region wastewater facility where it is treated before it is returned to the land as fertilizer for farm fields. Approximately 50% is injected in liquid form beneath the surface of farm fields while the rest is trucked to Walker Industries in Thorold where it is converted into a patented dry fertilizer eagerly scooped up by farmers.

"They liquid land apply 50% of their biosolids in Niagara and

they de-water the other 50% and send it here," said Geoff Boyd, Walker Industries Environmental's general manager of organics.

"At that point, it looks like pottin' soil, and then it gets trucked here and processed in the plant."

Joe DeBono, the region's biosolids supervisor, said sewage is treated via anaerobic digestion at the region's eight wastewater treatment plants. The treated biosolids from six of the plants are then trucked to the Region's Garner Rd. wastewater facility in Niagara Falls where they are stored in lagoons.

"We have a diversified bio-

solids program at the region," DeBono said. "A certain percentage of those biosolids gets spread on land and the other percentage goes through our two centrifuges at that location."

The centrifuges are used to de-water the biosolids. The region has another centrifuge at its Stanley Ave. wastewater treatment plant in Niagara Falls.

Boyd said Walker Environmental processes 26,000 metric tonnes of the treated waste per year, the bulk of which — 85% — comes from the region, the balance from the City of Toronto.

Continued on next page



ROB HOULE/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Geoff Boyd, Walker Industries Environmental's general manager of organics, stands in front of a biosolids rotary kiln.



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# LOCAL NEWS

## WASTE-WATER TREATMENT

### Walker Environmental turns poop into gold

#### From previous page

When the waste — which has 25-35% moisture in it — gets to Walker it is dumped into receiving bins in the processing plant where it is picked up by a conveyor belt that dumps it into a mixer where it is blended with an alkaline substance. The dry alkaline agent is a waste product derived from the cement-making process.

"We're essentially taking two waste products and making a new product," Boyd said.

The Walker Environmental plant buys its alkaline agent, which is rich in potash, from St. Mary's Cement.

"Potash is a very valuable farm nutrient," Boyd said.

After mixing, the product is dried in a rotary kiln. From there it goes to a cyclone separator, which sends the air to a "bag house" while the product drops to the bottom onto a screw conveyor. The air has dust removed and returned to the final product "so we don't lose of the nutrient value." Before the air is exhausted into the environment, it goes through an ammonia scrubber.

"The air contains a lot of ammonia because when you raise the PH of the biosolids the ammonia gets driven out, so we have to treat that ammonia before the air is released to the atmosphere," Boyd said.

The scrubbing process results in another byproduct — liquid ammonium sulfate — which is also sold as a fertilizer, Boyd said.

After the air is scrubbed, it undergoes one more step to remove odours.

"It basically passes through a big bed of wood chips," Boyd said. Since the wood remains moist, it is a good home for microbes, which "eat away at the odour as it passes through."

From the cyclone separator, the final product makes its way into a bunker, ready

for delivery to a wholesaler, who in turn will sell it to farmers.

The fully-automated plant has four full-time employees, Boyd said.

The product resulting from the process is sold under the name N-Rich. It is approved for use as fertilizers or soil amendments by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and sold in bulk to fertilizer distributors, soil manufacturers and land reclamation projects.

Walker Industries has been processing the Region's biosolids since 2007, when it partnered 50-50 with N-Viro Canada.

"They provided the technology, we provided the operations expertise," Boyd said.

"They had plants operating in Sarnia and Leamington since 1998. They had a good customer base for their end product. The big challenge in biosolids management is you can have the greatest process, but if no one is buying your end-product, what's the point of doing it. Their technology produced a good product, which there's actually a market for."

Walker Industries liked the product so much, they bought the company. Since May, N-Viro has been a wholly-owned subsidiary of Walker Industries. In addition to its operations in Ontario, N-Viro has plants in Halifax, Summerside, P.E.I., and Banff. Another plant is under construction in Sudbury.

The region pays Walker Environmental to take the biosolids, but they split the net revenue from sales of the end product. N-Rich is an easy sell and much in demand, Boyd said, adding the Thorold plant can handle more biosolids for processing.

"We're always trying to get (the region) to give us more," Boyd said.

rob.hulse@sunmedia.ca

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ROB HULSE/QUI AGENCY NIAGARA

This bed of wood chips is the final process of removing odours from the air before it is released into the atmosphere following the creation of N-Rich fertilizer.





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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ WORDS TO REMEMBER

# Say what: A collection of the most memorable quotes and one-liners from 2014

### QMI Agency Niagara

Great quotes punctuate a story like nothing else, breathing life into it.

Funny, tragic, poignant — here are some of the most memorable lines from 2014.

**"There's a wow factor here,"**  
MPP Jim Bradley at the Oct. 12 official opening of the Meridian Centre arena in St. Catharines.

**"I thought we were done.** The house shook, the lights started flickering and then it lit up like it was broad daylight."

Niagara Falls resident Terry O'Reilly, who believes lightning rods in the ground in front of his home saved his life during a storm June 29.

**"I love life and I love being old. I do what I want and I don't have to ask anybody."**

Jessie Kozachenko, 87, on May 24 at the Rankin Cancer Run, which she has participated in since learning she had cancer nine years ago.

### "It's All Welland Good"

A signature T-shirt and catchphrase invented by Jay Kalyrian, after he grew tired of hearing people spew negative words about his hometown. An All Welland Good event in October drew 600 people.

**"This is crazy. I feel like I've been given a brain by the Wizard of Oz."**

St. Catharines native musician Ron Sexsmith, 50, receiving an honorary degree from Brock University on June 3.

**"I would tell you, 'Suck it up,' but you might freeze your lungs."**

Environment Canada senior climatologist Dave Phillips, joking about the extreme cold about to hit Niagara on Jan. 20.

**"The Ontario PC party remains strong."**

Niagara West-Glanbrook

MPP Tim Hudak on election night June 12, announcing he would step down as Ontario Progressive Conservative leader after a scandal-plagued Liberal government defeated his PCs to win a majority win that night.

**"Because this is life on the edge. If you're not going to live life on the edge, get off!"**

David Hurst, sitting in the "suicide seating" section of the Niagara Roller Girls roller derby rink on June 21.

**"I was gassing the whole time."**

Roseanne Whalen of Fort Erie, speaking in police what it was like digging up her toddler Marissa from a hidden grave to remove evidence. The Oct. 14, 2011 video was played for the jury in her second-degree murder trial on March 31. She was found guilty and sentenced to life without parole for 15 years.

**"They never stopped. They never gave up. They saved Shane's life."**

Karl Nelson, the father of 21-year-old Welland man Shane Nelson, speaking in January about the efforts of Shane's co-workers, paramedics and emergency department medical staff to revive him after an hour without vital signs. Nelson was born with Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome, a congenital heart abnormality.

**"You would think there is something wrong with eating wonton at 5 a.m., but there is never a wrong time when you have it here."**

Customer David Walker, among the first in line when the popular Niagara Falls doughnut/wonton shop shop Country Fresh Donuts reopened on Nov. 12 after a car crashed through its front doors in April.

**"I do use adrenaline to perform, but you should also have respect for the fear."**

Enrique Valencia, performer of death-defying acts high above the skyline of the city in Niagara Summer of



Thrills, speaking on June 26.

**"I was on fire and I remember it was really, really hot."**

Cindy Campbell testifying in court April 28 about the July 2011 day her ex-boyfriend Mark Borel set her on fire outside Rockway Community Centre in Lincoln. A jury found the St. Catharines man guilty of attempted murder in late May and he was sentenced to 191/2 years in prison.

**"If you have quality of care, but not a quality of caring, that is not success. You need both, and we're not there yet."**

Kevin Smith, CEO of the Niagara Health System, in an interview in January.

**"She loved me without reserve, in a way that only daughters love their mothers. I will never be loved in that way again."**

Colleen Hood, the mother of 19-year-old Middle Hood of St. Catharines, reading a victim impact statement on Feb. 11 in court. Cassell Farnsworth was given life in prison with no chance of parole for 12 years for beating, strangling and stabbing Maddy before setting her apartment on fire in July 2012.

**"I'm still around. I must have a purpose."**

Jimmy (MacNeil) Hattie, who deals with poverty and addiction, interviewed for QMI's Faces of Poverty series, during a moment of sobriety in Niagara Falls in November.

**"I will not settle for a D. I will not accept 134th. And I know that you won't. Now is the time for action — bold and swift."**

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik at his inaugural address Dec. 1, referring to the D grade city received from the Conference Board of Canada and its ranking when measured by economy.

**"None of us brought our gloves and hockey sticks, that's why we're getting along."**  
Thorold regional Coun. Henry D'Angela at a Dec. 3 debate at the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls for four candidates for Niagara Region chair.

**"I agree! Do you!"**  
Niagara West-Glanbrook Liberal candidate David Mossey's Facebook post, which he removed and apologized for on May 12. The post from March 2013 showed photos of two scantily clad women's behinds,

said to demonstrate the difference between posterior of women who do squats and those who don't.

**"It was like daylight on that side of the house, and I thought, 'Well, something's up. I wondered why it was so bright outside. Then I saw there were flames shooting 20 feet out of the house."**

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Rayne Mayers, who saw his neighbour's house on fire on April 20 at the second time that same weekend.

**"He was a firefighter's firefighter. He had the respect of the rank and file. He walked in their boots and they respected that."**

Mayor Brian McMullan, speaking of St. Catharines fire chief Mark Meinenbacher, who died July 18 at age 55 of cancer.

**"I'm just a guy who survived an accident. I'm quite sure I could have died that day, but I made it because of faith and luck."**

Niagara OPP officer Pete Tucker on Nov. 17, speaking publicly for the first time after being hit by a goose while participating in a motorcycle training exercise on Hwy. 400 north of Barrie on June 25. He

stopped breathing, had his leg amputated, was in a coma and endured six surgeries.

**"I had an eerie feeling. This doesn't look good, I really don't like this."**

Marlene Hart of Grimsby describing her reaction to seeing a young boater offshore in Lake Ontario on May 18, moments before she and her husband Don Hart saved his life. The 17-year-old without a life jacket was in a sinking boat he built with instructions from the internet.

**"It's almost like saying, which one of your children do you love the best?"**

St. Catharines mayor Brian McMullan in an interview on Nov. 12, when asked which city project was his favourite.

**"I was kneeling, because the smoke was so thick. It was halfway down the door and I was screaming. My throat is still sore. You could hear the popping, the snapping and the cracking. It was on the verge of flashing over, and they wouldn't have gotten out. It would have been a recovery."**

Randy Smith, a facility maintenance worker with the City of St. Catharines, who with co-worker Rick Heuclick helped save a family from their burning home at the corner of Lake St. and James St. early on the morning of Jan. 9.

**"As a reporter, I pride myself on being able to get to the bottom of things."**

Welland Tribune reporter Maryanne Firth, who was sent to cover her own proposal at Chippewa Park on June 8. Firth had been writing about mysterious pink heart signs posted all over Welland — unknown to her, they were posted by boyfriend Ryan St. Denis. Firth had been assigned to cover an announcement about the hearts that was supposed to be made in the park that day.

Compiled by Karen Walker, Standard Staff



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